New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1947

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THEATRE OPENINGS

"Open House"

"Louisiana Lady"

Theatre Critics Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers

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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS — NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK MIRROR — NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK SUN — NEW YORK POST — NEW YORK TIMES

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"Open House"

PM EXCLUSIVE

JUNE 5, 1947

Kronenberger

Mary Boland Is Floored By a Bit of June Junk

Where but in show business are people at once so crass and such crackpots? Think of all the plays that get produced solely from a desire to make money—and that anybody not in the loony bin would know couldn't make money in ten years. Take *Open House*. I don't know which seems more staggering—the endurance needed to finish the script, or the optimism needed to finance it. Or perhaps the feeling was that if Mary Boland would appear in the play, all would be well—a feeling which Miss Boland herself seems to have shared. I wish for her sake she had been right, and that she could have turned stuff not fit for the trash-basket into a triumph. But for the theater's sake, the sooner that *Open House* belongs to the ages, the better.

For this dull, silly, rickety, inept little comedy has hardly more virtue as a vehicle than as a play. Only here and there—and only for the briefest moments—can Miss Boland, by her timing or her intonation, rise above the script and recall to us the comedienne she still, in any proper role, could be. Otherwise she, like us, was at the author's mercy—and he wasn't showing any. On and on went his exhausting shenanigans; on and off trooped the bedevilled cast.

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The play is one more offshoot of the housing shortage, with Miss Boland playing a warmhearted, rattlebrained widow who takes in some homeless young people as boarders. Since room-renting is strictly forbidden in the genteel, select faubourg that Miss Boland inhabits, she is soon in hot water, which grows hotter when she is suspected of running not merely a boarding-house, but a brothel. It is quite a mix-up, and quite a mess. Mr. Young is just no playwright; and on the present occasion, Mr. Ruskin is not too much of a director.—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

JUNE 4, 1947

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Poor Ventilation

MARY BOLAND tosses a few ingenuous innuendoes around in "Open House," the new comedy at the Cort. Her efforts merely serve to emphasize a preposterous bit of plotting. Harry Young, who claims authorship for this untidy show, has achieved the dubious distinction of writing a first act which promises nothing but boredom and carrying through the project to a grimly chaotic and tedious conclusion. Some one must have supervised this tag-end production of spring and early summer theatrical festivities. He should have quit cold after reading the script.

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In the revealing contours of professional make-believe "Open House" represents almost everything that is wrong with the racket. Young has placed a lonely elderly widow and some housing-hungry youngsters in juxtaposition, introducing a mean neighbor who objects to renting rooms in a restricted suburban area. From then on it is a dismal free-for-all, with the unwary spectator taking the chief beating. A prim Victorian house is taken for a brothel, there are minor amatory complications and a dramatic pay-off which would not have taxed the imagination of a bushman.

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Miss Boland is too experienced a trouper to be completely snowed under by dreary situations and lines. On occasion she arms them with wayward snickers. On the whole, she is luckiest when "Open House" is gallumping along, trying to keep one interested in a set of characters which would put a pall on the gayest party in town. Her chief assistants in last night's farrago on Forty-eighth Street did not even share her considerable reclame to make their efforts less obnoxious.

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John Harvey plays a petulant painter, whose relations to his pal's sister and the girl next door are never clearly established. Augusta Roeland tries to play the daughter of a prudish and avaricious matron straight with no more success than Joyce Mathews enjoys in corning up the part of an adolescent who likes to prance around in negligees. Curtis Cooksey has the anomolous part of a con man who turns square for no apparent reason. Coby Ruskin directed the piece, as if that mattered.

'OPEN HOUSE.'

Comedy by Harry Young; staged by Coby Ruskin; costumes, setting and lighting by Lee Kerz; presented by Rex Carlton at the Cort Theater Tuesday evening, June 3, 1947. The cast:

Mrs. Barrett	Mary Boland
Glenn Stewart	John Harvey
Lee Elkins	Don Gibson
Olivia Carey	Augusta Roeland
Expressman	Sammy Schwartz
Mrs. Carey	Ann Dere
Flo Elkins	Joyce Mathews
Miles	Dave Tyrrell
Joe	Steven Gethers
Bob	Del Hughes
Jeanie	Dulcie Cooper
Letter Carrier	Harold Grau
Uncle Watterson	Curtis Cooksey
Chief	Ben Loughlin
Policeman	Dennis Rohan
Mr. Westcott	William David
Photographer	Forrest Taylor Jr.
Mr. Pisudski	Will Kuluva

SYNOPSIS: The action takes place in the living-room of Mrs. Barrett's home in a small industrial city in the East. Time: The Present. Act I. Late one summer afternoon. Act II. Early evening. One week later. Act III. 11 a. m. the following day.

DAILY NEWS

JUNE 4, 1947

Mary Boland Returns to Stage In Dim Little Play, 'Open House'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Sam Wood, veteran movie maker and one of the best, returned to Hollywood recently after a look at the Broadway theatre and reported that, after all, the movies aren't so bad. Not even producers of punk pictures, he said, show the bad judgment of some of the impresarios of the legit.

Sam went home before last night premiere of "Open House" at the Cort Theatre—but he might nevertheless have been talking about this little comedy.

"Open House" isn't bad; it just isn't good enough to warrant space in a big-time playhouse. Its chief attraction is Mary Boland, a beloved comedienne of the fluttery school who has been away from the stage for five years. Miss Boland is as funny as circumstances permit — but the circumstances don't permit much.

House Shortage Again.

The managerial judgment which resulted in "Open House" coming to the Cort belongs to Rex Carlton, one of the several newcomers to a disintegrating profession. I am told that Mr. Carlton is, or has been, a promoter of wrestling matches. As such he should have more expert knowledge of entertainment values than his play evidences.

The comedy, written by Harry Young, is another one about the housing shortage. This time it is about an open-hearted and empty-minded widow (Miss Boland) who takes in two young men and a girl as roomers. Her house is in a highly restricted community and the woman next door makes trouble over this violation of zoning law.

Mr. Young's characters and situations are stock and the movement of the story is almost imperceptible. In spite of the presence of some pleasant possessors of Equity cards, including Joyce Mathews, Ann Dere, Augusta Roeland, John Harvey, Don Gibson and Curtis Cooksey, I'd rather have seen a wrestling match. It would have been funnier and would not have lasted so long.

The New York Times

JUNE 4, 1947

Ordeal of Mary Boland

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Scrupulously holding to the standards of the week, Harry Young's "Open House" kept open house at the Cort last evening. Since Mary Boland plays the leading part in it, you will not believe that it is a disastrous theatre frolic, nor will she. Like the authors of "It Takes Two" and "Tenting Tonight," Mr. Young is writing a comedy about the housing shortage which seems to bring out the worst in human beings and particularly in playwrights.

Little pieces of dreadfulness like "Open House" always provoke a sense of wonder about the sublime inscrutability of Broadway where some very peculiar things happen. When an actress of Miss Boland's quality plays bean-bag with such incompetent hokum, the sense of wonder deepens into awe. What did Miss Boland, the practiced comedienne, see in Mr. Young's straw-hat aberration?

Well, the character Miss Boland plays is rather sweet—a lonely widow, guileless but good-hearted, who mothers some homeless young people. Perhaps Miss Boland fancied it as a sympathetic rôle that would break the hearts of affectionate audiences and drown the theatre in tears of gladness. But the only thing that matters is that the author has written something in the general nature of a hubbub, not much better than "Heads or Tails," which may have infected the Cort Theatre. It is directed and acted in much the same vein; and it is a pity that Miss Boland got caught in this unhappy little accident.

The Sun

JUNE 4, 1947

'Open House' Is More Rubbish and Mary Boland Doesn't Belong in It.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

It's positively shocking to find an actress of Mary Boland's ability and prestige in such a piece of nothing at all as "Open House," put on last evening at the Cort. The great Frohman wouldn't have stayed through the first act. Most of us were ready to quit at the end of the second.

Unaccountably enough, Miss Boland has permitted herself to be caught up in the Cort's new play. Caught up in it and starred in it, playing the role of a widow who takes in roomers, two ex-G. I.'s, in a high-toned suburban neighborhood, and thereby brings on no end of rumpus.

The theater-wise Miss Boland, with her detached, preoccupied style of playing, her head tossing, her jerky delivery and her excellent sense of timing, reminds us of how accomplished a comedienne she has been and convinces us that she has lost none of her deftness. But she will have to avoid such harrowing and imbecilic pieces as "Open House."

The Cort's last tenant, "Heads or Tails," was bottom-of-the-barrel drama. This new one, written by Harry Young and produced by Rex Carlton, is down there pretty close.

Equity members involved in the vexatious proceedings include Curtis Cooksey, playing an oily and indigent uncle, who is bribed into marrying the widow; two pretty girls, Augusta Roeland and Joyce Mathews, and Harold Grau, a small-parts actor, who is forever wandering into plays for brief scenes—and who is always welcome.

The Cort Theater, plagued by transients since "Lady Windermere's Fan," went its way, will probably welcome a summer of darkness and silence. Both are preferable to such calamitous fare as "Open House."

So, with last night's exercises mercifully concluded, this department suspends play-reviewing for the month of June. Class is dismissed.

Journal and American

JUNE 4, 1947

Mary Boland Risks A Building Collapse

By ROBERT GARLAND

The decent thing to do while "Open House" drags its witless, unwelcome way around the lighted platform at the Cort is ignore your eyes and ears and concentrate on the fine contributions Mary Boland made to the living theatre before the motion-pictures called her away, tossed her about, and, with nothing immediate to occupy her talents, returned her to Broadway in a self-styled comedy of which even Hollywood would be ashamed.

So, closing your eyes and ears, you pretend to see and hear the Mary Boland you saw and heard with Robert Edeson in "Strongheart," John Drew in "Jack Straw" and Ethel Barrymore in "A Scrap of Paper"; the Mary Boland who was on her own in "The Torch Bearers," "Meet the Wife" and "Cradle Snatchers"; the Mary Boland who turned high comedienne in "The Vinegar Tree," "Face the Music" and the "Jubilee" from which "Begin the Beguine" survives.

Opening your eyes and ears, this can't be the same Mary Boland who's working her gallant way through the self-styled comedy the origin of which is blamed on Harry Young, the direction of which is blamed on Coby Ruskin and the decor of which is blamed on Leo Kerz? But it is! Then how, you ask yourself, did the great and glamorous Miss Boland become involved with so disastrous a dish as this. Actresses don't really have to eat. Or do they?

• • •

Talking, Talking

You'll not believe me when I say that "Open House" sounds very much as "Heads or Tails" might sound if its players played it backward. Maybe that's what Rex Carlton's actor-folk are doing, using some prompt-book left behind by performers in last season's nadir among plays. And if the Cort's new tenant doesn't win the Broadway booby-prize for 1947-1948, St. Genesus help the theatre's new season.

For the record let it be recorded that the locale of "Open House" is "the living-room of Mrs. Barrett's home in a small industrial city in the East." Here, Glenn Stewart and Lee Elkins arrive, followed by a truckman with Flo Elkins' torso on his mind and Flo Elkins' trunk on his back. The truckman, known to one and all as Mike, is a pretty rugged baby, with sleeves rolled up an extra hitch and thoughts on monkey business.

What happens from this point on, I've no idea. With the actors walking on and off, talking, talking, talking, and the audience walking in and out, darning, damning, departing, the plot of "Open House" remains a mystery to me. But I gather that the establishment Mrs. Barrett is open without being above board; that Madam Barrett never quite realizes just what transpires high up above her nose.

• • •

Skill Squandered

If this makes little sense when printed on an open page, it makes no sense at all when spoken on an open stage. Mary Boland speaks her makeshift lines as Mrs.-into-Madam Barrett with charm and clarity and skill. But, although programs wish them onto Harry Young, they sound as if no one ever wrote them down. Left to her own devices, Miss Boland could do herself a favor by making them up as she went along.

In Miss Boland's supporting cast, taking them as they come in printed programs, Curtis Cooksey is neither fish, flesh nor foul as everybody's elegant Uncle Watterson; Joyce Mathews is as winning as she can be as everybody's desirable Flo Elkins; John Harvey and Don Gibson are better than their fellows as Mary Boland's lodgers; Ann Dere keeps her face straight as a dogish next-door neighbor; Augusta Roeland does likewise as her daughter.

There are others, any number of them, recruited, I read, from lumber camps, motion pictures, Mississippi, The Windy City, the Army, "Tobacco Road," vaudeville, Marjorie Rambeau and the Marine Corps. But their tasks are tough, their fulfillments futile. To be franker at the finish, from attic to foundation, this "Open House" is jerry-built and untenantable, and Mary Boland is hereby warned that she risks her on-stage life by lingering therein.

New York Post

JUNE 4, 1947

The Drama Presents Another Calamity

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

So you think lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place? Well, you should ask the owners of the Cort Theatre, who, having got rid of the atrocity called "Heads or Tails" just last week, found themselves playing host to a similar calamity known as "Open House" last night. Of course, a comparison of the two worst plays of the year to anything as vivid as lightning is a little inept, but "Heads or Tails" and "Open House" are at least almost as disastrous and as shattering to the nervous system.

On behalf of "Open House," which is optimistically described as a "new comedy" by Harry Young, it may be said that it has the dubious virtue of demonstrating the stamina of both the drama critics and the theatre. That the critics were able to sit through "Louisiana Lady" and Mr. Young's play on successive nights, after having endured "Heads or Tails" a few weeks earlier, and somehow continue to survive, is certainly proof of their hardihood, but no more than the theatre's ability to plod right along after these calamities is irrefutable evidence of its indestructibility.

The worst thing about "Open House," in addition to its unbelievably boring witlessness, is what it does to such a talented actress as Mary Boland. With courage and vitality worthy of a better fate, Miss Boland acts the idiotic role of a bird-brained widow, who allows a lot of noisy and objectionable imbeciles to move into her home, as if she believed in the part and the play. She is very patient about it, but I'll bet even she couldn't tell you what the plot of the third act is.

The national housing shortage is unquestionably a shame and a scandal, and there is nothing worse about it than what it has done to the American theatre. Offhand, I can remember "Tenting Tonight" and "It Takes Two" as works dealing with this topical matter, and they were almost as unbearable as "Open House." The current offering, though, has an added sin on its soul. It almost seems to justify the housing shortage by making its would-be tenants such offensive characters that you feel they don't deserve homes.

Although Joyce Matthews is handsome as one of the girls involved in the plot and Augusta Roeland is almost believable as another of them, I was unable to feel that the members of the supporting cast showed signs of deserving far, far better things. But I did feel sorry for them in the inevitable scene wherein it was supposed to be killingly funny when the police mistook them for inmates of a brothel.

Daily Mirror

JUNE 4, 1947

Drama on Housing Falls a Little Flat

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Mary Boland is an excellent comedienne, but a bad judge of plays. Otherwise she would not have consented to star in "Open House," a clumsy farce carpentered from numerous odds and ends of the drama, which Rex Carlton brought to the Cort Theatre last night.

Author Harry Young, like other playwrights this season, is concerned with the housing shortage. And good plays about that problem are as difficult to find as apartments or houses. "Open House" is the worst of the lot. The late "Tenting Tonight" was a comedy gem by comparison.

Mrs. Barrett is living in genteel poverty in a shabby house in an Eastern town. Three nice, homeless young people come to her door in search of accommodations. Being a kindly soul and needing some extra money, Mrs. Barrett is reluctant to turn them away, but there is a zoning agreement which prevents room renting.

The youngsters decide to pose as relatives to beat the agreement, but a nosey neighbor becomes suspicious and phones the police. They mistake the place for a resort of ill repute and pull a raid, which manages to put handcuffs on the meddling dowager.

As if that weren't enough, the kids' grifting uncle pops up, and, using his sharp wits, effects a solution that at least gives "Open House" a final, if not convincing curtain.

Though "Open House" is not a model of originality, it does serve to introduce an innovation to the theatre: a commercial fashioned after those bores that alienate so many radio fans. This commercial plugs a local dry cleaning establishment. We hope that producer Carlton isn't setting a precedent. It's quite enough to suffer through a terrible farce, without having a dreary advertisement tossed at you.

Other capables laboring valiantly in the Cort's new cure for insomnia are Don Gibson, John Harvey, Augusta Roeland, Ann Deere, Joyce Mathews, Curtis Cooksey, William David, Dulcie Cooper and Dave Tyrrell.

Coby Ruskin directed and Leo Kerz designed the set.

"Open House" is a good argument for experimental theatres, where plays may be tried out at small cost. The best could be moved up to Broadway and the others shipped quickly to the storehouse.

The money saved could then be used by producers to present revivals of classics. This would maintain a high standard for the so-called commercial theatre, give angels a run for their sugar and prevent playgoers from being converted into film fans.

New York World-Telegram

JUNE 4, 1947

'Open House' Won't Have Many Tenants

By WILLIAM HAWKINS

There is an odious theatrical descriptive, "summer fare," which implies that after the middle of May, Times Square audiences will pay to see anything, regardless of how witless, inane and generally trying it may be. "Open House" falls into that optimistic classification.

One more rambling account of housing shortages, the play is couched in the irritated punning of discontented youngsters jibing at life in general, with no presumption that anyone will laugh at their remarks.

The play on the contrary strives very hard for laughs, and gets its largest number from a determined use of the word "house" with varied interpretations.

Mary Boland is starred, which should be welcome news. Unfortunately, the actress who has such a brilliant way of sounding aimlessly caustic when she chooses, plays a middle-aged nitwit who never seems much in the picture of what is going on.

The year's most familiar old saw is out here again, this time toothless. Miss Boland is a widow, lonely in a large empty house. A few moments after the curtain is up, she is surrounded by homeless veterans.

The neighborhood, represented by a one-dimensional she villain from next door, has rigid zoning laws against boarders. The ogre has the place raided as a commercial love nest and gets herself nabbed with her victims.

The widow marries the uncle of the young people to legalize their presence, but the neighborhood, now represented by its Mayor, decides that people should have a place to live.

Various love affairs bloom on this mechanical structure. It is the sort of endless blueprint plotting that needs the embellishment of uproarious humor. Here it receives vigor and speed, which do not take the place of wit.

There are a few moments where Miss Boland slurs out a line with a nicely humorous effect of her own making. More frequently her speeches are such deliberate nonsequiturs that even their pointlessness is elusive. In one sense the role is no challenge at all to her as an actress. In another sense it is an indefatigable challenge to anyone.

Of the younger group, Dave Tyrrell makes an engaging beau despite the embarrassing antics asked of him, and Don Gibson almost looks as if he believed what he was talking about as a voluble tenant.

John Harvey is a calmer squatter who wins the pleasantly placid daughter of the ogress, played by Augusta Roeland. Joyce Mathews is a handsome, hot tempered conniver of the trio of tenants.

The neighboring snob falls to Ann Dere's lot, and Dulcie Cooper makes the most of a laundress' lines.

"Louisiana Lady"

New York Post

JUNE 3, 1947

New Musical Comedy Arouses Little Joy

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

A musical comedy with the plot, dialogue and general manner of "Louisiana Lady," which opened at the Century Theatre last night, should at least have a score by Victor Herbert. In that case, one could have looked at the book as an antique oddity, the production as quaintly nostalgic and the show as another indication that the Master was never properly served by his librettists. Unfortunately, the songs by Monte Carlo and Alma Sanders, while agreeable, old-fashioned and reminiscent enough to recall an earlier day, are by no means serviceable substitutes for Herbert airs, and the general effect is not happy.

By far the best thing to be said about "Louisiana Lady" is that it offers a former child actress of the movies, Edith Fellows, in the leading role. It cannot be reported that Miss Fellows, who is pretty, with a gentle and occasionally humorous charm, and sings nicely, was able exactly to lift last night's proceedings into any semblance of success by her valiant work. Yet the simple and straightforward romantic grace which she brought to her performance of a foolish role certainly provided the only aid and comfort for the hopefully assembled playgoers.

The book, which is based on a play called "Creoles," is a strange kind of unresolved melodramatic hash. "Creoles" never was exactly one of the major works of its author, the late Samuel Shipman, and, with music to back it up, it is no more convincing than ever. Something about a wide-eyed and innocent girl of pre-Civil War New Orleans, who finds that her mother is running an expensive brothel, and the child's romance with a dashing Robin Hood of the sea, who hijacks slave ships and frees their inmates, it manages to create a minimum of interest.

Since it all takes place in New Orleans, naturally there is the Mardi Gras. That historic celebration being what it is, the costume designers and the dance director, who is Felicia Sorel, are thereby provided with something of a field day. It is one of the unpleasant things which must be reported that the opportunities are not taken advantage of in either case. There is some lively dancing by Lou Wills Jr., but that is about all.

Although it can hardly be said that any one in the cast, save Miss Fellows, has much success with the material at hand, the performers are industrious. Monica Moore as the scarlet mother, Ray Jacquemot as the dashing liberator, George Baxter as the sinister villain, Victoria Cordova as a presumably seductive Latin, and the veteran Charles Judels as a comic never cease trying. Bertha Powell, as a faithful Negro nurse, has the best voice.

If, as the season of summer playgoing begins, the public should suddenly develop a mad passion for outmoded musical shows, here would be its dish. Assuredly some of the earnest dialogue is incredible enough to be funny. This is the kindest thing that can be said about "Louisiana Lady."

"LOUISIANA LADY."

Musical comedy by Isaac Green Jr. and Eugene Berton based on "Creoles" by Samuel Shipman and Kenneth Perkins; lyrics and music by Monte Carlo and Alma Sanders; staged by Edgar MacGregor; dances conceived and staged by Felicia Sorel; settings by Watson Barratt; costumes by Frank Thompson; musical director Hilding Anderson; orchestrations by Hans Spialek and Robert Russell Bennett; lighting by Leo Kerz; choral arrangements by Anderson; presented by Hall Shelton at the Century Theater Monday evening, June 2, 1947. The cast:

El Gato	Ray Jacquemot
Joe	Lou Wills Jr.
Michael	Val Buttiglieri
Sarah	Tina Prescott
Corrine	Ann Lay
Germaine	Patti Hall
Annette	Angela Carabella
Susanne	Patti Kingsley
Marie-Louise	Edith Fellows
Charley	Howard Blaine
Christophe	Bert Wilcox
Hugo	Lee Kerry
Genevieve	Isabella Wilson
Madame Corday	Monica Moore
Pierre	Gil Case
Marquet	Robert Kimberly
Merluche	George Baxter
Alphonse	Charles Judels
Celeste	Bertha Powell
A Drunk	George Roberts
Hoskins	Berton Davis
Janet	Frances Keyes
Golondrina	Victoria Cordova
Lt. Mason	Patrick Meaney
Judge Morgan	Bert Wilcox

Synopsis: Act I, scene 1, a Levee in New Orleans, April, 1830. Scene 2, a study in Miss Browne's Finishing School, Sunday afternoon. Scene 3, the Parlor of the Casino De Luxe of Mme. Corday, the following evening. Scene 4, a garden. Scene 5, the parlor, a few minutes later. Act II—Scene 1, Canal Street. Scene 2, the Cascathean Cafe. Scene 3, a street. Scene 4, the garden.

New York Herald Tribune

JUNE 3, 1947

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Comatose Carnival

THE new musical comedy at the Century, "Louisiana Lady," finds the stage in the most listless of doldrums. Lacking wit, musical invention and persuasive performing, this Hall Shelton production is simply soporific. Although it has borrowed some fancy trappings from an out-of-town derelict, it is not even pretentiously dull. Its vulgarity, as it alludes to didoes in a better-class New Orleans bordello in 1830, is too muted to attract more than yawning notice from the most staunch defender of public respectability. The mock it makes of gay song and dance conventions is calculated to make one sad rather than angry.

Isaac Green, jr. and Eugene Berton are credited with the book of this comatose carnival, having adapted it from a hoary work by Samuel Shipman and Kenneth Perkins. They have had something of a scramble padding it out to a conventional two-act length. There is considerable to-do about a high-minded sailorman called El Gato, who is presumably engaged in the slave trade, but is really taking Negroes to Haiti and freedom. Of more consequence in sustaining a stuttering libretto is a romance between the innocent daughter of a New Orleans Madame and the sea-faring gent. Edith Fellows is personable and frequently on key as the ingenue. Ray Jacquemot plays it cozy as the hero.

Had they or the other principals a few good songs to sing they would have a happier time in "Louisiana Lady." Unfortunately, the lyrics and music by the quaintly named Monte Carlo and Alma Sanders are either derivative or downright bad. "I Want to Live—I Want to Love," "The Cuckoo-Cheena" and "No, No, Mam'selle" are a few typical numbers in their somewhat extensive collaboration. The titles are a tip-off as to their poetic and melodic eloquence. The dances staged by Felicia Sorel are a curious combination of slip-shod ballet, the shimmy of a couple of decades ago and acrobatic improvisations.

Monica Moore, as the sheltered heroine's somewhat tarnished mama and Charles Judels, as a supposedly comic wine steward in the New Orleans establishment, have the thankless tasks of portraying meddling bystanders. They are forever trying to inject Mickey Finns into the champagne of a wolf of the period, or pretending that the shenanigans at Mme. Corday's Casino De Luxe merely constitutes a surprise party for a nipper returning from boarding school unexpectedly. George Baxter, Victoria Cordova and Lou Wills jr. are others who have billing in "Louisiana Lady." They help neither themselves nor a sorry show by their participation in it.

The Sun

JUNE 3, 1947

'Louisiana Lady' Dismal Musical Show of New Orleans That's Not So Gay.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

"Louisiana Lady" is a pretty sorry affair. It is by no means the very worst of the musical shows, but it is certainly one of the dullest. The new production, wasting a lot of somebody's money, was brought into the Century last night by Hall Shelton.

"Louisiana Lady," containing elements of a road misadventure called "In Gay New Orleans," drones and dawdles along. The book is awful, the dialogue witless, the music fairly pleasant at times, and most of the performances are on the routine side. In telling its story of love and intrigue and slave-running against a background of old New Orleans, the Century's new exhibit drags the recently vital song and dance theater back two or three decades, perhaps all the way back to "The Paradise of Mahomet."

The scenery (Watson Barratt's) and the costumes for "Louisiana Lady" are quite all right, but backdrops and clothes never did make a show, or save one, and the proceedings at the Century are so steadily laborious I suspect that "Louisiana Lady" is beyond all hope.

Edith Fellows is a pretty and pleasant ingenue, and sings nicely. Ray Jacquemont is a manly hero with a strong voice. Charles Judels, the veteran comedian, works hard trying to inject some comedy into his part and into the play, but he is never very funny. George Baxter brings a style of villainy right out of the Stair & Havlin circuit into his playing as the foul Merluche. A tap dancer is always good to have around and Lou Wills Jr. is a particularly fine hoofer. I could have taken a great deal more of him. The production's best songs—lyrics and music by Monte Carlo and Alma Sanders—are "When You Are Close to Me," "That's Why I Want to Go Home" and "Just a Bit Naive."

"Louisiana Lady" is well-intentioned and expensive, but the evening at the Century is a very long one.

DAILY NEWS

JUNE 3, 1947

New Orleans Is Just About as Gay As a Hangover in 'Louisiana Lady'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"Louisiana Lady," a musical which Hall Shelton presented last evening at the Century Theatre, achieves an odd distinction: it is so undistinguished in music, lyrics, plot, dances and acting that it must have been done on purpose. Nobody could just happen accidentally on so well-intentioned and inoffensive a bore.

The music, by Alma Sanders, has the outward appearance but not the inner liveliness of operettas as they were done between 1910 and 1920. Several of the tunes are almost, but never quite, recognizable. They begin as good Straus or Friml—or Offenbach, even—and wander off into nobody before they finish.

The lyrics, by Monte Carlo (that's what it says in the program: Monte Carlo), have such themes as "Gold, Women and Laughter." Mr. Shelton, producer, may be the man who broke his bank on Monte Carlo.

The plot is based on "Creoles," an old play by Samuel Shipman and Kenneth Perkins. It concerns New Orleans around Mardi Gras time in 1830, and it involves a love affair between an innocent wench from a finishing school and a fearsome but pretty pirate named El Gato.

The actors include Edith Fellows as the girl, Ray Jacquemot as the pirate, Monica Moore as a mother and Charles Judels as a comedian who is in the appalling state of having nothing to be funny with. Lou Wills Jr. does some of his upside-down dances and the chorus girls are pretty. Watson Barratt's scenery is pretty, too.

"Louisiana Lady" is being offered at a $3.60 top, which is very low for a musical show these days—but not low enough.

New York World-Telegram

JUNE 3, 1947

'Louisiana Lady' Has Little to Recommend

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

There may have been more objectionable shows than "Louisiana Lady," but there can seldom have been any duller. This new musical is just ordinary from the word go, without distinction of any kind.

There are several personable and willing enough players, but they might as well be acting and singing in a silent picture for all the help they get from their material.

It is hard to believe that a full-length musical can pass an entire evening without a real laugh, but this does.

The songs sound like reprisals hummed by someone with a not very accurate ear. They recall Strauss, Romberg, Stephen Foster and Cole Porter vaguely, but defy you to remember them. As one lady in the audience remarked, it is the sort of show where the audience walks into the theater humming the hit tunes.

The story is a thin thing which seldom tries to rear its head. It concerns a lady who through debts has been forced into running a house in New Orleans of no repute and even less charm. Her daughter in boarding school does not know this, but finds it out.

Her persecutor is also an importer of slaves, this being 1830, and the pirate who hijacks his human cargoes falls in love with the lady's daughter.

A typical solution of the complications that ensue is the rescue of the pirate by simply blowing up the warehouse in which he is locked awaiting execution.

There are numerous dancing numbers of more violence than beauty, whose executors have not yet learned to get out of each other's way.

Of the cast Lou Wills Jr. does more than anyone else about stopping the show. This he accomplishes by ferociously slinging his body into aerial flips and drawing an ovation of relief after the sedentary proceedings that surround these acrobatics It is a talent unrelated to this show, which he has revealed before and will again.

Edith Fellows and Ray Jacquemot sing the romantic leads pleasantly if to no sensational avail, and Monica Moore reveals a sweet voice and a gracious air of being out of place as the wronged La. Lady.

Victoria Cordova gives the show more vitality than any half dozen of the other characters. And Charles Judels attracts good will despite some sorry material.

"Louisiana Lady's" most marked talent is for inspiring fleet exodus. Last night, the instant the plot began to look clear, what remained of the audience sighed and surged toward the doors, heedless of a promised finale.

PM Exclusive

JUNE 4, 1947

Kronenberger

Summer Season Opens On a Very Sour Note

The sets and costumes of *Louisiana Lady* are said to be inherited from a musical that closed out of town last winter. Inherited or not, they are palpably the newest things in the show, the rest of which seems straight out of the era of the buffalo nickel and the spangled shawl. The plot is based on an old Samuel Shipman work entitled *Creoles;* the music is based on all the pre-Sarajevo operetta composers in turn; the dancing is based on the rather outmoded theory that with enough energy you can dispense with style, and even with skill. And the humor would seem to be based on the old gag about the lecture bureau that couldn't send a wit as an afterdinner speaker, so sent two half-wits instead.

The result is a very trite show and a very tedious evening. What is perhaps most endurable about it is its reminiscent tunes, which are at least reminiscent of something attractive. And *Louisiana Lady* has one vivacious feature in the specialty dancing of Lou Wills, Jr., who stopped the show Monday night, though unfortunately not for long. Otherwise, *Louisiana Lady* is all that a summer musical shouldn't be but almost always is. The story, laid in New Orleans in the 1830s, has to do with a very innocent schoolgirl who comes home unexpectedly, quite unaware that mama runs a bordello; and who falls in love with a dashing and humanitarian pirate, who specializes in scuttling slave ships. The air for a while is thick with particularly moronic double-entendres, and all evening the stage is a funeral parlor for sad, sickly, stunted little jokes. Some of the dancing is at least animated, though none of it has any real distinction or lure.

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There being no miracle workers in the cast, such well-meaning performers as Edith Fellows, Monica Moore, Charles Judels, Ray Jacquemot and others cannot be praised for their efforts; but neither should they be blamed. *Louisiana Lady* asks too much of everybody on both sides of the footlights.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER.